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Values and Governance Issues in the Foreign Policy of Singapore

Leonard C. Sebastian

THIS CHAPTER will present perceptions and assumptions that attempt to characterize the relevance of values and governance to Singapore's approach to foreign policy. Where this approach diverges from the "Western" view, it must be understood within the context of Singapore's unique history as a small state that struggled to develop a political system suitable to its immediate, difficult circumstances. As such, Singapore has had to invent a political culture. The argument made here is that the current regime pertaining to values and governance should not be seen in purely static terms. The approaches adopted by the Singapore government have been appropriate and successful for a particular developmental and historical phase. Looking to the future, there is every possibility that an evolving economic and political environment and a more developed polity—materially and socially—may require a reassessment of how values and governance are conceptualized.

The chapter is structured in four parts. The first part assesses briefly the function of "identity" and "image" in international relations theory. The argument is made that in an environment dominated by established states, emerging states have to develop innovative foreign policy options to assert their independence in order to "seek a place at the table." Here the case is made that the constructivist approach to international relations theory is ideally suited to analyze the foreign policy dilemmas faced by an emerging state like Singapore. The second part discusses the unique domestic setting that has fundamentally shaped Singapore's value system. It examines how a political

culture had to be manufactured from scratch and sets the stage for the third part of the chapter, which analyzes the manner in which Singapore elites sought to defend the city-state's values in a vigorous exchange of ideas with the West in the "Asian values" debate. The final part of the chapter attempts to place in perspective the Asian values debate and assesses the main lessons to be gleaned from the various political discourses both East and West. The chapter concludes with a brief glimpse of Singapore's evolving polity.

THE ROLE OF IDENTITY AND IMAGE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY

For the bulk of the cold war, two approaches to international relations theory dominated the discourse on how states behave and interact in the international system. Neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism[1] sought to utilize the rational actor model to analyze how states interact under the constraints of the international system. A general theme consistent in the depiction of state behavior was that states are unitary actors that want to maximize their self-interest in an environment of other competing actors, resulting in a perpetual struggle for survival, power, and wealth among largely self-confined entities. By and large, the realist reading of international politics remains unaltered in the post–cold war world. The realist tradition within international relations theory maintains that justice and morality have little or no influence in international relations theory. The morality that can be found there is an international morality that the established states of the international system observe in their interactions with each other. The duties and obligations of international morality are thus those pertaining to the norms of interstate relations in the developed world. The possibility that other orders and structures may exist is generally excluded. Morality neither has nor should have a decisive role in the relations between states. The central premise of realist theory is that such a condition exists because relations between states are characterized as being in a condition of anarchy and that no authority able to maintain order stands above them. Under such circumstances, the morality of the established states overrides the rights of emerging states that have yet to be deemed "acceptable" as members of international society.

While such a condition may be moderately altered as a consequence of the rise and fall of great powers, it is highly likely that the main tenets

of political realism will remain valid, as they have since Thucydides laid the groundwork with his treatise on the Peloponnesian War. Yet lesser states have always found practical methods to survive and thrive in an international system prey to whims of the great powers. In analyzing Singapore's foreign policy behavior, this chapter attempts to assess how issues pertaining to identity and image influence Singapore's foreign policy options and thereby enable it to punch above its weight. The idea that states should be seen as social actors whose actions follow international or domestic rules (Andrews 1975) and whose behavior is conditioned by rules, norms, institutions, and identities has only been recently explored in depth through the constructivist approach.[2] From the constructivist perspective, identity can be defined as a relatively stable, role-specific understanding and expectation about self. Though borrowed from sociology, the issue of identity has utility in the study of foreign policy because it refers to perceptions or impressions states have about who they are and who others are.[3]

The relevance of such concepts for international relations cannot be underestimated because state identities form the basis of what is commonly referred to as "national interests." Other than the need for survival, which remains fundamental for all states, national interests tend to vary in form and substance. It is, however, unlikely that the national interests of states are independent of their social setting. For example, much of the intellectual sustenance for Singapore's promotion of Asian values comes from its domestic debate on a proposed national ideology that had its origins in the late 1980s and in 1991 eventually crystallized into a set of shared values that Singaporeans of different races and faiths could subscribe to and live by (White Paper 1991). Just as the national security policies of Germany and Japan have been influenced by a state identity premised on being a "civilian power" (Maull 1990–1991), similarly the Singapore government has opted for what scholars have termed a "communitarian democracy" based on a set of shared values (Chua 1995, 184–202). Such approaches to state identity, I argue, have immense implications for the study of international relations because they provide implicit recognition that states are not amorphous entities whose identities are shaped by the hegemony of the day. Rather, states indeed possess specific identities that evolve from a historical and domestic context. In defending its brand of communitarian democracy, one aim of Singapore foreign policy is to challenge the West on whether it is prepared to accept variants in the concept of democracy, or more important, to accept that

such variants could in all likelihood be the "end product" and not transitions in the process of becoming more like carbon copies of Western liberal democracies.

In this context, the Singaporean identity is based on norms that can be defined as "collective expectations about proper behavior for a given identity" (Jepperson, Wendt, and Katzenstein 1996, 54). Such norms are useful indicators in that they serve as standards for guiding the behavior of an actor; but more important for the purposes of international relations theory is that they enable other actors to evaluate a state's actions and intentions. In some instances, a state's survival depends very much upon the willingness of other international actors to respect its norms. For example, the respect of sovereignty is a fundamental norm in the international system. The traditional balance-of-power system that prevailed prior to the outset of World War II has been subjected to new normative regulations where weak, marginal, or insubstantial states are now exempted from the power contest, at least in part, and treated as international protectorates. Classic examples are Bosnia, Cambodia prior to the elections sponsored by UNTAC (UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia), and Haiti. Hence, the weakness or backwardness of countries is no longer justification for conquest or colonialism. Nor are these conditions justification for international support of antigovernment rebels in derelict African states—unlike nineteenth century Europe, for example, where the "spectacle" of a "ramshackle" Austro-Hungarian empire "which denied freedom to its subject peoples" provided grounds for foreign intervention in the eyes of John Stuart Mill and other liberals (Ryan 1974, 214).

International development assistance is usually coupled with demands for the protection of human rights, but sovereignty is not interfered with or even questioned. Therefore, it is not empirical differences and variations among states that are novel—although these are probably greater today than ever before, owing to the globalization of the international system. Rather, it is the way that inequality and underdevelopment are conceived, evaluated, and responded to by the members of the international community that has changed. In this sense, states unable to defend their value systems may become open invitations for unsolicited external intervention. Hence, attempts to impose or insinuate Western values expressed in terms of human rights are resented as intrusions into Asian political jurisdiction and a way of trying to subvert the region's comparative economic advantage. They are also resented because they are seen to carry unwanted infection in the form

of drug abuse, high crime rates, and family disintegration—hardly the basis for a new civilizing mission.

As such, identities may not necessarily be derived only from within states; they can also be shaped by interactions between them. A valuable contribution from the constructivist school has been the notion that systemic cooperation can over time lead to the formation of a collective identity among a group of states (Wendt 1994). Here, a collective identity refers to a situation where states positively identify with the fate of others. Interests are defined with reference to other states and in time could create a sense of community. Such collective identity formation has developed in Western Europe through the European Union and to a lesser extent in Southeast Asia through the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)—which has found mutualities through shared norms, like nonintervention. The speed with which a collective identity is developed, however, hinges upon the nature of external stimuli. In the case of Western Europe, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization developed as a security community among liberal democracies nurtured by a strong communist threat. Similarly, the Clinton administration's threat to link foreign aid/trade policy to tangible progress in democratic political reform had enormous repercussions for the foreign policy of China, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. It is not implausible to contend that if the United States continues to maintain a hard-line stance on this issue, there is every likelihood that a collective identity of like-minded states opposing U.S. policy could develop. Certainly, seeds for such a collective identity became readily apparent by 1993 and 1994 with Singapore and Malaysia taking the lead in the Asian values debate.

Singapore's own vigorous defense of its position is also a consequence of its size as a city-state in the international system. Being a mere dot on the world map makes it necessary to shout louder to be noticed. Over and above this, the policy options open to a small state are limited. First, it can either choose to forgo its independence and integrate with or be part of a larger entity. Second, it may retain its independence but opt for a "dependency status" with a great power. Or third, it may choose to assert its independence actively and work with regional states and other international actors (Lau and Kadir 1995, 75). Singapore had experienced the bitter lessons of the first option when merger with Malaysia in 1963 proved to be politically destabilizing for both sides and subsequently led to an acrimonious separation in 1965. It had also witnessed the unfortunate consequences of the second

option when the United States, facing pressures at home, decided to abandon its ally South Vietnam. Hence, Singapore's best option remained a proactive and assertive foreign policy.

For a small state, a key foreign policy strategy to employ is image.[4] Of importance in this sense are how images, be they accurate or inaccurate, supplement usual forms of power and become indispensable for reaching certain goals. Critical in this sense is how an actor/state can influence beliefs about itself and lead others to make predictions about its behavior that will contribute to its reaching its goals. Throughout history, states have often cared about specific issues less for their intrinsic value than for the conclusions they felt others would draw from the way they dealt with them. Hence, an image is apt to make other states retreat or act cautiously in conflicts with the state concerned (Jervis 1970, 3–17).

To get others to believe an image, however, a state must act out that image fully. This view implies that states which intend to project a particular image must give proof that the image is correct. For Singapore, being one of the most Westernized societies in Asia, the key in championing the Asian values cause was to try to present itself as a credible Asian country so as to take advantage of East Asia's economic rise and probable greater clout in the international system. While civil war or national conflict can undermine the region or misguided resistance by losing competitors can delay it, Singapore's policymakers believe that the global center of gravity is shifting to their part of the world. From their perspective, culture, while not a mere product of economics, will be a beneficiary of it. This has implications for Singapore, too, if it is not to be left out of the dialogue between the West and Asia just as the latter begins to grow more equal. Whereas 1993 was full of shrill rhetoric, the tone in 1995 moderated considerably, and there was a tendency to talk more in terms of "fusion" through multicultural groupings like the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, rather than to follow the logic of a clash of civilizations (Mahbubani 1995, 116, 119).

The image then presented was one of Singapore acting as a bridge between East and West with conciliatory statements reflecting the need for East and West to learn from each other and to adopt each other's best practices. I advance three plausible reasons why Singapore moderated its position. First, perhaps this strategic shift was done on the premise that Singapore was risking becoming an international pariah at a time

when issues pertaining to democratization and human rights were becoming more important in international society.

Second, a uniform Asian position was illusive, and no acceptable definition of Asian values could be found. For those who were puzzled as to why the Asian values debate took such an ideological hue, it may be enlightening to view the debate as American positions generating their own opposites. This may be one reason why voices in Asia had never been united on these fronts.[5] Very few Asians actually believe in the various perspectives put forth by politicians and scholars enunciating Asian values as it is not difficult to see how potentially ideological these positions are. Nevertheless, a considerable number were willing to use them because an ideological counterdiscourse was needed to balance the one habitually used by the United States.

Third, Singapore's dependent economy and strategic circumstances left it no alternative but to strive for balance in diplomatic relations so as not to alienate the United States. After all, Singapore continues to see the United States as a major economic player and, more important, as a crucial part of Asia's new emerging security architecture. The use of image in Singapore's foreign relations, hence, does take into account that states are not unitary actors and must usually take more than one audience into account.

Particularly through the comments of Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore was quick to emphasize the important role China will play in global politics of the twenty-first century. As a strong proponent of China's integration into the international system, Singapore has asked the West to adopt a more conciliatory stance in its relations with China. Not surprising, Lee was hailed by China's international news magazine *Yazhou Zhoukan* as the "new Asian warrior who hits back at the West" ("The Asian Values Debate Revisited" 1996). If such a view is congruent with elite Chinese perceptions of Singapore's role in the Asian values debate, then it is hoped that gains made in this regard can be translated into real influence with China's leaders when that country achieves its potential.

The Asian values debate has been described as a clash of civilizations, but the most important dimension is within Asian states, and not between them and the West. For instance, when Singapore's leaders address the West and berate its governments for failing to understand the differences of culture and experience between their two worlds, they are more often than not speaking to their own domestic audiences with a political aim in mind. Advocacy of Asian values has persisted

because of abiding concern by the Singapore government about its ability to control the political system, especially in the midst of rapid economic development and social change.

DOMESTIC BASES OF THE ASIAN VALUES DEBATE

The People's Action Party (PAP)[6] came to power in May 1959 as a coalition of a highly competent but elitist group of Western-educated professionals led by Lee Kuan Yew who sought the support of the island's Chinese-educated majority through alignment with radical trade unionists linked to the illegal Communist Party of Malaya. Tension arose between the moderates and the radical left wing of the party when merger between peninsular Malaya and Singapore was sanctioned in 1961, resulting in the defection of the latter, who formed the Barisan Socialis. The split precipitated a major political crisis that jeopardized the PAP's working majority, as well as the prospect of Singapore joining Malaysia. During Singapore's short stint in Malaysia, the rump of the PAP governed with support in parliament from right-wing parties. Merger into the Federation of Malaysia was to bring its own set of problems, particularly in the aftermath of the PAP's unsuccessful foray into peninsular Malaysian elections, which generated racial tensions.

This experience left the PAP firmly opposed to mass, popular, participatory, "democratic" politics, both in principle and practice. In principle, it was felt that representative politics was unsuitable for the Singapore masses, who lacked the political culture to participate and were deeply divided along ethnic and religious lines. The perception in the minds of the PAP elite was that democracy played into the hands of dangerous ideologues, such as communists and communalists, who were adept at exploiting the racial cleavages and religious prejudices of the masses. Hence, when merger with Malaysia failed in 1965, Lee Kuan Yew turned his back on democratic socialism and opted instead for a strict uncompromising style of government. It is a style of governance that has brought results. It is almost a cliché to say that modern Singapore is run efficiently. Its educational and health standards are among the highest in the region. The republic's legal system is based on the British model. Singapore boasts well-run public services and an orderly urban administration. These are features that have attracted foreign multinationals to go beyond manufacturing and locate their regional corporate headquarters in the city-state.

However, despite over three decades of uninterrupted growth in Singapore, the issue of economic and political survival remains embedded in the national consciousness. The reasons for such an outlook are related to the country's specific circumstances. The total land area of Singapore (including the smaller islands) is 641.4 square kilometers. Other than its strategic position and utility as a communications hub, it has no natural resources. As a multiracial society, Singapore has had its share of communal conflicts in the past, especially when it was part of Malaysia. In the 1950s, worker strikes, unemployment, and political unrest were commonplace. Such conditions created uncertainty regarding the future. These feelings of insecurity reached a pinnacle in 1965 when Singapore was forced out of the Federation of Malaysia. No doubt, feelings of vulnerability have receded to some extent, especially among the postindependence generation. Nonetheless, this does not alter the essential challenges of survival that Singapore has to cope with. Singapore remains a small independent city-state dependent for its well-being on favorable external conditions and, perhaps more critically, its internal dynamism. The political culture governing debate on issues of national importance is therefore premised on these parameters of survival.

In the context of Singapore, the logic of survival entailed two significant factors: the institutionalization of a value system that would maintain national unity and promote a common purpose, and the institutionalization of a value system that would motivate economic attainment. Both factors are interrelated as they hinge on the importance of internal dynamism as a prerequisite for success.

Achieving national unity in Singapore's multiracial society entails not only the protection of legitimate civic rights irrespective of class, racial, and religious affiliation but also equal protection under the rule of law. Both aspects undergird all dealings between individuals and the state. If anything, the courts of law or the judicial system are seen as the highest and most legitimate arbiter of right and wrong within the ambit of the Singapore Constitution. Attempts to impugn or question the judiciary's integrity amount no less to undermining Singapore's stability.[7]

Race is another issue that remains critical to internal political stability. Its potential concern to peace and harmony continues to be taken seriously, notwithstanding the growing openness and sense of common purpose evident in present-day Singapore. Early initiatives to ameliorate such concerns began with the promulgation of multilingual,

multireligious, and multicultural nation building. To give form to the policy, multilingual schools were established with parity of status and treatment. The ongoing rationale seems to be that in matters of language, culture, and religion, it is best that the government be absolutely impartial. Should it intervene at all, it would have to do so in the interest of maintaining cultural and linguistic equality. As we will see later, such an even-handed though firm approach did manage to yield high political and economic dividends. One vital development approach has been to encourage communal self-help on behalf of deprived or disadvantaged groups in society.[8] This political philosophy not only affirms the policy of protecting civic rights but more important gives form and meaning to that policy. It requires communitywide mobilization of resources for communal uplift—socially, educationally, and culturally. In this, each community is seen as a partner in development with the government, with the latter playing a facilitative and enabling role.[9] It is hoped that this stress on ethnic community bonds through self-help and the promotion of multilingualism will have the effect of strengthening the ability of Singaporeans to develop cultural networks with the immediate region to enable Singapore to develop an "external wing" to its economy.

Many of the initiatives targeted at enhancing values are aimed at sustaining Singapore's developmental momentum. Stress is placed on the notion that a society works best if its members value self-effort and self-reliance. In this context, the point is made that a welfare state, however well-intentioned, can lead to the erosion of the work ethic and to weakness and concomitant economic and social failure. Hence, the organizational norm adopted by the government is one based on creating a meritocratic society transcending racial, class, and cultural barriers. Essentially, the meritocratic norm of social organization envisages the creation of a social structure based on talent and economic efficiency, in the process denying the importance of race, class, and cultural affiliation and thereby providing assurance of equality of treatment and access to scarce positions and resources. In this way, the logic of multiracialism and multiculturalism is reaffirmed. Moreover, the meritocratic approach attempts to ensure that development initiatives succeed, where reward or recognition is made a function of performance and work achievement.

Two basic imperatives, namely, political stability and economic security, shape not only value concerns but also the policies implemented to realize them. Actualization of the former imperative has

assumed a variety of forms, among them the institution of a system of compulsory national service of two and a half years for all male Singaporeans above 18 years of age; the growth of the bilingual national school system founded on shared political values; and the tightening of legislation against the misuse of religion for political ends, as exemplified in the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act 1991. Enhanced economic security has been linked to the cumulative raising of the educational standards of the population as a whole and the optimum utilization of Singapore's strategic position as a communications and service hub for Southeast Asia and beyond. Singapore will also rely on enlarging its manufacturing and industrial capacity, in particular in relation to information technology. To actualize the former, the Ministry of Education has restructured the school system to enable more students to pass critical examinations to acquire higher training qualifications over an extended year of study and therefore reduce attrition and drop-out rates; reduced the staff-student ratio to provide quality teaching; and implemented the "independent" school—an educational institution that is given freedom and flexibility, including financial and infrastructural support, to vary its subjects and course offerings to develop talent and promote creativity.

Internal political stability continues to remain a preoccupation with the Singapore government. This generally implies developing strategies to manage race relations effectively, such as, first, ensuring that all the major ethnic communities are adequately represented in Parliament under the group representation constituency formula; second, responding quickly to attempts to sow racial or religious discord by recourse to the authority vested in the courts; and third, promoting and facilitating multiethnic or multicommunal contacts through nationally supported institutions, such as schools, community centers, national service, trade unions, and sports activities. To reinforce these measures, there is a Presidential Council for Minority Rights in Singapore.[10] Under this system, minority interests are safeguarded by the state, the argument being that such an arrangement is less likely to disadvantage those who are financially unable to organize and lobby in the American manner.

Yet effective economic development strategies and sensitive management of ethnic relations are only one side of the coin. Over the last few years, the government has been preoccupied with an agenda aimed at ensuring that the best and brightest are retained for positions of leadership within the government and the civil service. The goal being to

make possible Singapore's continued future well-being, there is a need to ensure that those in positions of power are people of integrity and imbued with honesty and probity in public life. The importance of maintaining high moral and ethical standards in government is not a matter of recent concern. Existential circumstances have, however, etched more clearly the need for more tangible strategies in addressing it—the best example being the recent pegging of ministers and civil servants' salaries at levels comparable to the leading income earners in the private sector.[11] Such an approach, as argued by the leadership in power, attempts to meet two objectives: It attempts, first, to draw those with the moral and leadership qualities into politics (for otherwise they would not enter public service because of the attractive salaries offered by the private sector); and, second, to reduce the prospect of corruption seeping into the corridors of power, thus undermining the entire political system.[12]

Indeed, the PAP views political leadership as the most critical parameter in maintaining Singapore's stability and prosperity. Paying ministers, permanent secretaries, and other high-ranking civil servants well, though adding to the quantum of annual public expenditure, is in a direct sense investing in Singapore's future. While such values as service to the nation for its own sake, civic responsibility, a sense of loyalty, and patriotism are not thrown overboard, they are seen more as virtues that need to be cultivated or encouraged and less as realistic options for the recruitment of high-caliber and responsible leaders and administrators. Statecraft as perceived by the PAP leadership remains quintessentially pragmatic, the guiding principle being first a concern with what works in politics and economics and only incidentally with what might be termed "higher ideals," such as public service for its own sake without expectation of personal gain or reward. The values espoused up to this point of the discussion are existentially driven, the underlying belief being that failure to internalize and act on these values would lead to dire political and economic consequences. Missing from the equation has been the need to develop a strong and broad-based civic culture that could provide a human face to Singapore's development. The central thematic frame validating these values was that of national survival.

The same logic of pragmatism in crafting values was extended to Singapore's majority Chinese population. From the historical perspective, whatever its shortcomings, Confucianism is a uniquely Chinese creation. It puts stress on duties and responsibilities—an emphasis from

the PAP's perspective in accord with the requirements for meeting the requirements of a modern state characterized by social pluralism and the need to legitimize relatively new institutional structures. In Confucian society, political leaders are expected to be moral exemplars, to lead responsibly, and to be caring of the people. Confucianism's essential philosophy does not depart from the philosophy inherent in the great religious traditions of the world. To counter any suggestion that a Chinese Confucian philosophy was being forced on to the minority populations, Muslim/Malay Singaporeans, as in the case of Hindu Singaporeans, were encouraged to learn their own mother tongues and, by extension, their respective cultural-religious values. Similarly, Chinese Singaporeans themselves are in varying degrees morally and ethically Confucian, though spiritually they could be Buddhist, Taoist, Christian, or Muslim. Hence, maintaining identity with Confucianism as proposed for Chinese Singaporeans is seen as natural and being Chinese. Strongly reinforcing such perspectives was the notion that economic strides made by societies founded on Confucian values and the apparent lack of clear "moral-ethical" directions in Western societies and their emphasis on individual rights at the expense of social responsibility had added meaning and credence to the importance and appropriateness of Confucian values. To be sure, Confucian philosophy stresses moral-ethical integrity and social responsibility as the prerequisites of political leadership. This perspective is precisely what the government under the PAP has committed itself to uphold.

The need to strengthen family values and ties has also become part of the government's agenda. In the last two decades, Singapore has witnessed important structural changes in the working population as a whole. First of all, in view of the country's small population base the demand for more skilled workers made it necessary to encourage women to enter the labor market. The enrollment of women in institutions of higher learning is now on par with that of their male counterparts. More critical, in a sociological sense, is their increasing preference to take up full-time employment even after marriage. This obviously has important implications for child care, family relations, marital stability, and care for the aged. The second structural change is the graying population. The 1990 Census of Population recorded a fall in the age dependency ratio from fifty-four per hundred in 1980 to forty-eight per hundred in 1990.[13]

In the last decade there has been a rise in the incidence of divorce.[14]

The perceived neglect of aging/dependent parents prompted the passing of the Support for Parents Bill in 1994, which requires working children to support their dependent parents, should the latter lodge a complaint of neglect. Following closely on this was the institution of the Family Court to provide legal recourse to family members suffering abuse and neglect. The Family Counseling Centres (FSC) of the Ministry of Community Development also play an important role in providing marital and premarital assistance/advice on family and family-related matters. A special scheme to enhance the future prospects of low-income families is the Small Families Improvement Scheme, implemented in 1993.[15] Closely associated with the issue of low-income families is the drug problem among youth, which though by no means as critical a problem as in other modern societies is nonetheless seen as insidious and a potential cause of a breakdown in family life, which could undermine the social fabric. These initiatives to consolidate the family should be seen as both reactive and proactive, guided by clearly delineated values to achieve social cohesiveness and national vigor, without which Singapore's ability to meet the demands of survival would be weakened. Inherent in these initiatives is the basic concern with preserving Singapore's competitive edge in the international economy.

It is relevant to say that as Singapore embarks upon the new millennium, the country approaches, perhaps, the most crucial period in its development since independence in 1965. Significant events in the run up to the new millennium have been the transfer of power from Lee Kuan Yew—the only prime minister that Singapore had hitherto experienced—to his designated successor, Goh Chok Tong; the pushing through Parliament of the proposal to adopt an elected presidential system; and the promise of Goh and his cabinet to adopt a more relaxed, less authoritarian political style. In tandem with such political changes are significant new sociological trends that have occurred as Singapore becomes a more mature society and its social structure takes root. In this new environment a new middle-income group has emerged that cuts across ethnic lines, experiences the conspicuous consumption of material goods as a way of life, and enjoys a higher standard of living and a greater degree of political freedom and participation than during the Lee Kuan Yew era (See 1996). Managing the rising expectations of this group will be the most pressing challenge for a new generation of PAP leaders.

For the PAP to retain its dominance of the system through the use

of hard authoritarianism would, however, be impossible or at least potentially costly in the current political climate. There have been clear indications that the government is pursuing a new political agenda that encompasses a more people-friendly approach to governance, the relaxation of censorship, and the encouragement of more spontaneous artistic and cultural activity. The pace of liberalization has been slow, but, more important, the PAP has made a concerted effort to channel social change in a suitable direction through its own variety of a counterculture by suggesting in the late 1980s that Singapore should have a national ideology similar to Indonesia's Pancasila or Malaysia's Rukunegara. The idea was introduced publicly by then–First Deputy Prime Minister Goh in October 1988 in a speech to the PAP Youth Wing (Goh 1988, 13). In January 1989, Lee Hsien Loong, then minister of trade and industry, suggested in another speech four core values that should constitute this ideology: (1) community over self; (2) upholding the family as the basic building block of society; (3) resolving major issues through consensus instead of contention; and (4) stressing racial and religious tolerance and harmony (Lee 1989, 31). In the same month in his speech at the opening of Parliament, the president addressed the same question, and in January 1991 the government issued a white paper that discussed the proposal in detail and expanded the elements in the list from four to five: (1) nation before community and society above self; (2) family as the basic unit of society; (3) regard and community support for the individual; (4) consensus instead of contention; (5) racial and religious harmony (*White Paper* 1991). In this latter form, the shared values concept[16] was now proposed as the basis for what Goh had initially termed the national ideology. References to these values have been constantly articulated by the PAP leaders, either as a reminder to the population about the need for social cohesion or as a defense against attacks on Singapore's system by the Western media.[17]

Even without being institutionalized, many of the values discussed above resonate in Singapore society. Let us take, for example, the consensual style of politics in Singapore. For example, a considerable amount of political decision making occurs not in Parliament but in the ministries through ministers using public sentiment as a gauge. Citizens can sometimes act more directly to affect the direction of policy through their feedback to the government than indirectly through members of Parliament arguing for their interest. For example, the Graduate Mother Bill, which gave financial incentives to women with

tertiary degrees to bear children, was repealed due to extremely un-
popular reception, although it was passed in Parliament almost unani-
mously. Another example would be the decision not to table the one
man–two vote bill because of strong unfavorable ground reaction when
the idea was floated by Lee Kuan Yew, even though many members of
Parliament and ministers spoke in favor of it.

From an observer's perspective, the PAP's promotion of shared val-
ues should be seen in the context of a combination of factors: first, the
demise of authoritarian regimes in the aftermath of the cold war, par-
ticularly the rise of pluralistic polities in previously authoritarian
states like South Korea and Taiwan; second, a more mature economy
increasingly open to the pressures of the information age; third, social
changes that have created an affluent and often property-owning middle
class with high expectations; fourth, a working class now increasingly
detached from traditional types of employment and the social condi-
tions that went with them. Particularly among the Chinese commu-
nity, in both the middle and working classes, and the small but highly
visible economic elite, people are less and less in tune with the cultural
sources from which they sprang. For example, Chinese Singaporeans
visiting China find it in many ways an alien place: In most instances,
they would feel more at home in London or New York.

Such changing class structure has major implications for future so-
cial and political patterns. What is interesting is that the government's
response to this, at least as it is conveyed through the shared values
concept, has not been a sociological one, that is, trying to understand
the implications behind the changing nature of Singapore society, but
a culturalist approach—seeing the problem essentially in terms of lack
of cultural values, not patterns or institutions, and remedying the situa-
tion by reintroducing or reinforcing those values thought to be absent
or insufficiently stressed. As a first line of defense, the government's
strategy seems to revolve around the premise that a change in values
will bring about corresponding changes in social practice. This approach
alone, however, will not suffice. As a second line of defense, the PAP
leaders have stressed the issue of governance, particularly the merits
of good government.

Since the 1984 election, the PAP has been steadily losing ground to
the opposition. In 1991, the PAP won just under 61 percent of the vote.
While it was hardly likely that the PAP could lose an election owing to
the current fragmented nature of the opposition in Singapore, there is
similarly no guarantee that such a situation could be taken for granted,

as exemplified by the demise of a monolith like Japan's Liberal Democratic Party. Hence, the PAP has adopted three strategies to counter this trend. The first was the introduction of constitutional changes to parliamentary politics. This saw the introduction of two nonconventional categories of members of Parliament, namely, the nonconstituency members and the nominated members.[18] The second was the introduction of the group repesentation constituency (GRC).[19] Here three or more electoral constituencies may be grouped into one GRC. And third was the introduction of an elected presidency.[20] The most significant power of the elected president is the veto on the annual operating budget of the elected government, should it decide to draw on the national financial reserve. This initiative was motivated by the perceived need to prevent subsequent governments from adopting irresponsible fiscal policies, such as excessive welfarism, just to capture state power.[21]

Linked to the issue of government competence, PAP leaders, particularly Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew, have extolled the virtues of good government. A good example of Lee's perspectives on the matter is a speech made in November 1992 in Tokyo in which he asserted that foreign aid should be linked to good government and that democracy was not necessarily part of the equation:

> Peoples of all countries need good government. What is good government? This depends on the values of a people. What Asians value may not necessarily be what Americans or Europeans value. Westerners value the freedoms and liberties of the individual. As an Asian of Chinese cultural background, my values are for a government which is honest, effective and efficient in protecting its people and allowing opportunities for all to advance themselves in a stable and orderly society where they can live a good life and raise their children to do better than themselves. Whilst democracy and human rights are worthwhile ideas, we should be clear that the real objective is good government. That should be the test for official developmental aid. Is this a good government that deserves aid? Is it honest and effective? Does it look after its people? Is there an orderly stable society where people are being trained to lead a productive life? (Lee 1993)[22]

The most authoritative position on good government was, however, enunciated by Goh in his September 16, 1995, address, entitled "The Role of Government in the East Asian Miracle," at the Center

for Development Economics at Williams College in Massachusetts. In his speech, Goh argued that economic development requires political stability, which in turn depends on "good government." He went on to describe his notion of good government as government built on three pillars: democratic accountability, long-term orientation, and social justice (Goh 1995). In his assessment, to achieve long-term stability governments have to govern with the consent of the governed as conveyed through the ballot box—making Singapore no different from Western societies. However, he added, what differentiates Singapore from its Western counterparts is its long-term orientation. Goh noted that in the United States, for instance, the government is supposed to respond to the expressed preferences of the people. This type of democratic government, he pointed out, is vulnerable to economic populism, as illustrated by the budget-deficit problems of the United States. Most developing countries, especially small ones like Singapore, he said, can ill afford such policies. Goh concluded:

> This is why, in Singapore, government acts more like a trustee. As a custodian of the people's welfare, it exercises independent judgment on what is in the long-term economic interests of the people and acts on that basis. Government policy is not dictated by opinion polls or referenda. This has sometimes meant overriding populist pressures for "easier" economic policies. Indeed, implementing the right policies has on occasion meant administering bitter medicine to overcome economic challenges. The trustee model of democracy that Singapore has subscribed to enabled it to pursue the tough policies necessary for economic development. Indeed, the concept of government as trustee went hand in hand with democratic accountability. Because the government has acted as an honest and competent trustee of the people, we have been returned to power in every general election since self-government in 1959. With a comfortable majority and strong mandate, we have been able to take a long-term view in addressing our economic problems. (*White Paper on Shared Values* 1991, 10)

To this list of governance indicators highlighted by Goh could also be added seven qualitative indicators: leadership based on high standards of integrity; the need for a clean and efficient civil service as a key institution in nation building; the primacy of education in national development; the avoidance of welfarism; law and order; communal

harmony; and the strengthening of physical and social infrastructure for socioeconomic development and industrial capacity.[23] Taken at face value, these values are not particularly unique or specifically Singaporean. All countries subscribe to such values in part or in whole. The important distinguishing feature is the manner in which such values are articulated by Singapore leaders: Concepts like "good government" and "shared values" almost take the form of ideology and become the state's raison d'être, requiring some form of defense when the legitimacy of such values is challenged by external forces. Not many countries will have that same ideological commitment. And as such, the defense of such values in the international realm becomes of paramount importance.

IN DEFENSE OF SHARED VALUES

Walter Lippmann's celebrated statement that "a nation is secure to the extent to which it is not in danger of having to sacrifice core values, if it wishes to avoid war, and is able, if challenged, to maintain them by victory in such a war" (1943, 51) highlights the seriousness with which states in the international system view values. Wars have been fought to uphold Protestant values (Thirty Years War), in defense against French-style revolution (Napoleonic Wars), against fascism and militarism (World War II), and in more recent times against the spread of communism (cold war period), to name a few. Hence, the study of values and its impact on international relations is an important subject. To see how the Asian values issue[24] crept into the Singapore foreign policy agenda, it is useful to elaborate on five underlying perceptions, prevalent at the end of the cold war, that shaped Singapore's outlook.

First, there was concern that in the post–cold war era issues relating to democratization and human rights may become more prominent as a precondition to foreign relations and trade between states in the international system. The United States, the prime mover in the debate over democracy and human rights, particularly under the Clinton administration, is Singapore's largest source of capital investment and its largest export market. Any American move to make democratization and human rights a condition in this economic relationship would have important and possibly grave consequences. Singapore had every reason to be concerned. In 1987, Singapore's General System of Preferences (GSP) benefits were withheld by the United States because of American allegations of copyright violations. Similarly, Singapore

alleged that its bid to host the inaugural World Trade Organization meeting in December 1996 was undermined as a result of American displeasure over the Michael Fay caning.[25]

Second, the Singapore elite, buoyed by substantial economic success, felt growing confidence about the strengths of their model, which appeared to justify the policy of putting economic development first and giving priority to order and stability—what was described earlier as "good government." There was a sense among the elite that their own traditions and values had served them well.

Third, there were suspicions that the West had a hidden agenda to maintain hegemony by slowing down Asian growth and curtailing Asian competitiveness by "changing the rules" to invoke a new form of protectionism with human rights and democracy becoming the standard-bearers of what was perceived to be a new form of colonialism.[26]

Fourth, there was a feeling that the Western model being promoted, referring primarily to the U.S. model, was flawed and undesirable. People were concerned that the kind of social decay seen in the West would occur in Singapore.

Fifth was the conviction within elite circles that Western democracy and human rights concepts had threatening implications for Singapore's economic success, indeed its very existence as a nation. Although the perception may be extreme, it is a strong force in the highest levels of government and party. To understand it, we must go back to the earlier part of this chapter, where I outlined briefly the circumstances in which the governing PAP came to power, the economic strategy that propelled Singapore to success, and the highly centralized and efficient structure of government and power in Singapore, which was seen as a prerequisite for survival.

It was under such circumstances that a group of political and academic leaders, termed the "Singapore school," came to the forefront in the Asian values debate. These prominent Singaporeans argued that human dignity and "good governance" are best achieved by a political regime dedicated to social order and rapid economic growth (Jones 1994). Lee Kuan Yew's views on culture, destiny, and good governance formed the touchstone of the Singapore school. The core tenets of his views are as follows:

  ✦ Values are learned differently in West and East, with one's mother's milk, and Western-style democracy requires certain cultural impulses absent in many Asian societies.

- The exuberance of democracy leads to undisciplined and disorderly conditions inimical to development.
- Asian leaders are right to put the material needs of their people first, even if they have to be brutal to attain that goal, although brutality for its own sake is undesirable.
- Participatory politics will come to Asian societies as they develop, but the process is slow and to hasten it according to the dictates of the West is to court disaster ("Asian Values Debate" 1996).

Naturally, most liberal intellectuals in the West will find such views unpalatable even if they cannot deny the historical observations underlining Lee's ideas. To these Singapore thinkers, a benevolent form of authoritarianism is preferable to liberal democracy. For them, how democratic a government is, is not as important a source of legitimacy as how well a government manages the economy so as to increase general living standards. Chan Heng Chee, then director of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore, succinctly defined the nature of the Asian values debate from the Singapore perspective:

> The "East-West" or "Asian Values" debate is on three different but linked questions. It is firstly a clash of views over democratization and the promotion of democracy; secondly, it is about different perspectives on human rights; and thirdly, it is a debate on whether values have universal validity or whether values are specific and tied to geography, history and time and relatedly, how to look on the role of governments or leaderships which seek to preserve or promote values. (Chan 1996 cited in Sebastian 1997, 285)

The Singapore school placed the interests of the majority before the rights of the individual. In such a system of justice, for example, the overall interests of the larger community outweigh the rights of any of its members. In the Michael Fay case, it appeared to American human rights groups and newspaper columnists that the punishment did not "fit" the crime. It was, however, not meant to. Punishment in a community-oriented system is not designed to punish the individual. It is administered to protect the community as a whole and thereby serve as a deterrent to potential mischief-makers. Hence, the question was not whether Fay deserved his punishment but how the system could ensure that no future misdemeanor occurs.

The Singapore school also extolled the virtues of economic development and rapid economic growth over other political and social goals.

This was a consequence of Singapore's own economic backwardness and high levels of unemployment, poverty, and homelessness upon de-colonization in 1965. Singapore's success in the modernization of its economy has prompted some within the Singapore school to feel justified in presenting Singapore as a developmental model that may be more applicable for Asian and developing states than the European model of liberal democracy.[27]

Echoing Lee Kuan Yew's own concerns regarding the excesses and negative aspects of American society and the desire to identify a set of values that he saw as broadly characteristic of East Asia became another common theme among the Singapore school.[28] In an article in the *International Herald Tribune* in 1993, Ambassador-at-Large Tommy Koh (1993) inquired whether East Asia stood for any positive values. He was followed up by Kishore Mahbubani, permanent secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in an article in *Foreign Affairs*, entitled "The Dangers of Decadence," where he criticized the "hero worship" given to the idea of individualism and individual freedom:

> Freedom does not only solve problems, it can also create them. The United States has undertaken a massive social experiment, tearing down social institution after social institution that re-strained the individual. The results have been disastrous. Since 1960, the U.S. population has increased 41 percent while violent crime has risen by 560 percent, . . . divorce rates by 300 percent and the percentage of children living in single-parent homes by 300 percent. This is massive social decay. Many a society shudders at the prospects of this happening on its shores. But instead of traveling overseas with humility, Americans confidently preach the virtues of unfettered freedom, blithely ignoring the visible social consequences. (Mahbubani 1993, 14)

A related concern with American-style liberal democracy that is worth mentioning is the fact that the system has as its basis an ideology of pluralism. To get elected in such a system, politicians have to appeal to as great a number of voters as possible by saying everything and hence nothing. Policy decisions in such a state will be highly sensitive to pressures from interest groups and tend to be directed by big money and often lack consistency. Furthermore, long-term intelligent planning is almost impossible because short-term interests must be satisfied to win votes. The Clinton administration's inability to reform welfare, sort out its public health-care system, or cut the deficit

are cases in point. Since wealth determines the amount of political influence, poor communities, such as African-American or Hispanic and various other less-privileged groups, are practically locked out of the political process.

Bilahari Kausikan, then director of the East Asian and Pacific Bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, also took a critical approach to the West in an article, "Asia's Different Standard," where he questioned the West's motive in placing human rights on the agenda of interstate relations. He went on to emphasize that such motives should be questioned and commented that such moves are an "easy, cheap, and popular way to exercise influence or maintain the illusion of involvement" (Kausikan 1993, 35). In reply to the assertion made by Western human rights activists that political and civil rights are fundamental and necessary institutions for human dignity, he responded: "Such an argument does not accord with [Asian] historical experience. That experience sees order and stability as preconditions for economic growth, and growth as the necessary foundation of any political order that claims to advance human dignity" (35).

The final perspective to consider is the view of Sree Kumar, a former staff member of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies. In an article entitled "East Asia's Economic Lessons for the World," he refers explicitly to the World Bank publication *The East Asian Miracle*, which stated that "government intervention in many forms was instrumental in the success of the East Asian economies and explains partly the successful emergence of the newly industrialising economies of Southeast Asia" (World Bank 1993). According to Kumar, this requires a rethinking of the meaning of "good government," to one that is based upon the needs of economic development rather than on political process and individual rights. He asserts:

> The basic issue is whether political freedoms as enshrined in the unchecked freedom of the individual would restrict economic growth. Alternatively, the question can be phrased as what the borders of individual freedoms should be so as not to impede economic growth. It is in this domain that East Asia has succeeded in defining the political framework which incipient industrialising economies require for sustained growth. But this in itself is not a static design. As economic growth proceeds, the demands of the economy and the population change and this calls for new borders of freedom to be drawn. The political process, therefore,

has an important role in keeping economic growth on a consistent path while ensuring that new borders are made apparent. (Kumar 1994)

The above excerpts provide some indication of the range and depth of the approaches to the Asian values debate in Singapore's government and academic circles. Despite their different perspectives, they advance a consistent view: that an individualist perspective on democracy and human rights is a Western concept, and the West has either a sinister or naive motive in imposing such concepts on other countries. In light of this, the implied argument is that non-Western states must have the autonomy to establish their own codes of conduct suitable for their unique economic, political, social, and cultural circumstances, which emphasize the state, society, and family relationships and duties and which presume economic growth as their basis. Politics and civil rights are subordinate concerns. The rights of the individual are subordinate to the interests of the majority.

CONCLUSION

Perhaps in the final analysis, the Asian values debate should not be seen purely from the perspective of the West trying to find new ways of exercizing hegemony over Asia or the East using Asian values to validate authoritarian leaders and their so-called repressive systems regardless of their competence. Such generalizations are unhelpful in getting to the crux of the debate.

Ultimately, the Asian values debate revolves around the vital question of what constitutes "good society." Its essence was well captured by an article in the *Economist* ("Asian Values" 1994) that viewed the debate as all about how best to organize a modernizing society to achieve and maintain prosperity and security; how to find a balance between freedom and stability; and the need to strive for some equilibrium between government responsibilities and individual rights and duties. In straightforward terms, the debate in its essence is about how to preserve the values of a "good government," which in turn acts to promote "good society."

Although Lee Kuan Yew believes his brand of authoritarianism works best, the other proponents of the Asian values debate representing Singapore, some of whom in the past opposed Lee's perspectives, do believe there are other alternatives. They have, however, backed the

cultural argument because they know that such alternatives do not include the U.S. model. For a few of the Singapore school, the U.S. promotion of democracy at its very extreme amounted in effect to cultural hegemony. Because Lee Kuan Yew's argument has been that Singapore achieved such growth and development due to his authoritarian style of governance, when Singapore became wealthy some of the government's critics turned the argument around and posed the question, Isn't Singapore developed enough to afford less development?

In fact, Tommy Koh did just that a few years ago in the Singapore press when he lamented that Singapore was overregulated.[29] In the same vein, he cautioned that Singapore should avoid being a vociferous spokesperson for the East. Being the most "occidental of the oriental societies" (Koh 1998, 358), Singapore, in his perspective, was a unique combination of East and West. Singapore's role, therefore, was "to seek common ground between East and West, to interpret one side to the other and to avoid a civilisational clash between East and West" (358). He cautioned that when East Asians expressed pride in their cultural heritage, such expressions should not be misconstrued as a form of cultural relativism or at worse chauvinism. Illustrating that there are a similar number of good and bad Asian values as there are good and bad Western values, he contended:

> At the risk of offending many of my Asian friends, let me cite a few examples of bad Asian values. I regard the caste system in Hindu culture; the subjugation of women; the practice of nepotism; the attitude of subservience to those in authority; the tradition of authoritarian rulers; and the shame which parents feel towards their children with physical or mental disabilities as bad. I would also like to point out that many of the characteristics of modern Singapore which make us successful are derived from the West. I refer, for example, to our independent judiciary; our transparent legal process; our excellent civil service based on merit and free of corruption; science and technology; management culture based upon merit, team work and the delegation of power; the uplifting of status of women; the belief in affording all citizens equal opportunity; and a political system which makes government accountable to the people though regular elections. (357–358)

Similarly, Chan (in Tu 1984, 198–214) spoke out against efforts to institutionalize Confucianism in the Singapore education system during

a public debate when Lee Kuan Yew brought in Harvard professor Tu Wei-Ming to strengthen his position. I, for one, profoundly disagree with any notion that Asian culture is somehow uniquely suited to authoritarianism. When, however, confronted with the rhetoric of writers, like *New York Times* columnist William Safire, who seem blissfully ignorant of why certain Asian countries developed in the manner they did and blithely assume that the American brand of democracy is the universal model, it was not surprising that the more liberally minded of the Singapore school tended to gravitate toward Lee's point of view in order to close ranks.

Whatever the outcome of the Asian values debate, nothing can alter the fact that the political landscape in Singapore is subtly changing. Professionals, locally trained and Western-educated, are beginning to debate issues such as the right of citizens to be critical of government policy without being stigmatized as "unpatriotic." This does not mean that Singapore will become a facsimile of the United States in the near future because one fundamental difference exists. Whereas U.S. citizens place their faith in "the system" and believe that if one party is not delivering the goods, they can vote in another to do a better job, Singaporeans continue to place their faith with the governing party and believe that through subtle prodding or not so subtle voting for the opposition they can push their leaders to adopt a more liberal stance. No one considers seriously the option of rule by another party because at this juncture in Singapore's history none of sufficient caliber exists. Even if an opposition party does manage to build up as impressive a store of talent as the ruling party (this in itself would be a gargantuan task), they have the arduous job of accumulating sufficient legitimacy for an electoral victory to be possible. With so much of Singapore's economy tied up with the ruling PAP, middle-income groups, who are the majority, are generally very cautious about a change and would not ponder an option as dramatic as voting the PAP out of power. The main issue that constantly surfaces among better-educated and young Singaporeans is not about the government's performance but about shared ownership of public policies through participation in policy formulation.

Indeed, the government's adherence to a model of governance stressing accountability and transparency has brought it much credit in a region characterized by a sharp economic downturn as a consequence of the Asian economic crises. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has commended Singapore for its robust fundamentals, which have

shielded its financial market from the regional turbulence—high savings, fiscal and current account surpluses, flexible markets, robust reserves and high standards of regulation, and supervision for domestic financial institutions, which had sheltered its market and shored up investor confidence ("IMF Praises" 1998). If anything, Singapore's leaders probably feel vindicated that the model of governance they have cultivated has proven to be resilient. Notwithstanding its sound fundamentals, Singapore's exposure to the region will drag it into the turmoil. Singapore's leaders nevertheless remain confident that the very strengths that put the city-state ahead of its neighbors before the crises began—and its eagerness to adjust to changes in the world around it—will enable Singapore to emerge further in front when the regional crises conclude.

Notes

1. For neorealism, see Waltz (1979). Possibly the best exposition of neoliberal institutionalism can be found in Keohane (1989).

2. The constructivist approach can be differentiated from materialist theories like neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism in that it utilizes a sociological approach as its basic point of reference for analyzing human behavior. It draws some of its methodology from postmodernism as well as from more established approaches like Bull's (1977) perspectives on "international society." For a useful understanding of the constructivist approach, see Katzenstein (1996) and Wendt (1994).

3. For a useful discussion of the issue of identity from a constructivist perspective, see Lapid and Kratochwil (1996).

4. The best study on this subject remains Jervis (1970).

5. See, for example, Kim Dae-jung's (1994) elegant rejoinder to Lee Kuan Yew's views on Asian values.

6. The PAP, founded in November 1954, has ruled Singapore since 1959. For a brief period of two years (1963–1965), PAP rule was subsumed under a federal system based in Kuala Lumpur. Following separation from the Federation of Malaysia in 1965, the PAP has continued to maintain its hold on power.

7. The most prominent case to receive international attention recently was that of Christopher Lingle, a former lecturer in European Studies at the National University of Singapore, whose article in the *International Herald Tribune* in 1994 was deemed by the Singapore authorities as obliquely impugning the integrity of the Singapore judiciary. He was cited for contempt of court and subsequently fined S$10,000.

8. There are four registered community self-help organizations at present: MENDAKI (Council for the Development of the Singapore Muslim Community); CDAC (Chinese Development Assistance Council); SINDA (Singapore Indian Development Association); and the Eurasian Community Fund. Thus far, communal self-help programs have focused on educational support, cultural development, social welfare, and religious education.

9. The community-based self-help organizations collect varying monthly amounts from working individuals. An automatic deduction system has been instituted through the CPF scheme (Central Provident Fund) and deductions correspond to the person's salary bracket. All working Malay Muslim adults pay between S$2 and S$5 per month to MENDAKI; Chinese Singaporeans pay between S$0.50 and S$1 per month to the CDAC; Indian Singaporeans pay between S$2 and S$7 per month to SINDA; Eurasian Singaporeans pay between S$2 and S$10 per month to the Eurasian Community Fund. Individuals who do not wish to contribute can ask to be excluded.

10. The council is chaired by the chief justice of the Singapore Supreme Court. Its members include six ethnic Chinese, three ethnic Malays, three ethnic Indians, and two Eurasians. In this connection, the feedback unit of the government also contributes to this process by providing citizens with a forum to raise issues and grievances and thereby helps to reduce potential tension and misunderstanding.

11. For details, see the *White Paper on Competitive Salaries for Competent and Honest Government* (1994). The statement of validation reads as follows: "Competent political leadership is crucial to good government. Singapore must draw its Ministers from among its most outstanding committed citizens. It must find a continuing flow of men and women of ability and integrity, who will govern the country, mobilise the population, and chart future directions for the nation. [Otherwise] it will lose the competitive edge over other countries which enables it to thrive and prosper and compensate for its smallness, vulnerability and lack of resources" (1).

12. This aspect of moral-ethical concern should be seen in relation to the PAP's ongoing efforts at leadership renewal; hence, the careful selection of potential party candidates for election and the obligatory period of testing to ensure suitability prior to elevation in the government/party hierarchy.

13. The age dependency ratio is defined as persons aged below 15 years and 60 and over years to persons aged between 15 and 59 years. Perhaps the major cause of this is the government's two-child policy, which was reversed in 1987. Various incentives are now offered (including tax rebates) to arrest the population trends.

14. The rate of divorce recorded for non-Muslim marriages under the Women's Charter in 1991 was 11.1 per 100 marriages, in contrast to 21.4 per 100 marriages among Muslims in the same year.

15. Under this scheme, low-income families will receive (a) bursaries for school-going children worth S$200 a year for those in primary school; S$400 a

year for those in secondary school; and S$800 a year for those in junior college/
pre-university classes and (b) a housing grant of S$800 paid into the CPF
account of the wife until she is 45 years old or for twenty years, whichever is
sooner. The total grant is worth S$16,000.

16. For a comprehensive analysis of the shared values concept, see Chua
(1995, 31–35).

17. An example is Goh's August 1994 National Day Rally speech, entitled
"Moral Values: The Foundation of a Vibrant State" (reprinted as "Social Values,
Singapore Style"; see Goh 1994).

18. Nonconstituency members are candidates of opposition political par-
ties who did not win their seats but who polled the highest number of opposi-
tion votes in a general election. A maximum of three seats are automatically
offered to such candidates, who have the right to decline; if declined, no alter-
native offers need to be made. The nominated members are nonpoliticians
nominated by the public at large but selected by a committee of elected mem-
bers. The injection of these members introduces contrary opinions into Par-
liament and, hopefully, reduces the circulation of dissenting voices outside the
official political sphere and agenda. Having been given official recognition, dis-
senting voices are likely to be more moderate and respond to the center of the
political spectrum as a consequence of their cooptation.

19. In a general election, each political party must field candidates as a
slate, of which one must be a member of a racial minority. The slate that polls
the highest combined votes carries all the seats in the GRC. This has two po-
litical effects. On the positive side, the insistence that a member of the GRC
must be of a minority group ensures that the Malay and Indian populations
will be represented in Parliament; this may alleviate the likelihood of extreme
racism in politics. Indeed, such was the government's declared reason for pro-
moting the change in the Constitution. Implicit in such a mechanism for mi-
nority representation is the recognition that the enforced physical integration
of minority racial groups among the Chinese majority in all housing estates
has created the possibility that only Chinese candidates will be elected to Par-
liament in future elections. On the negative side, such policies have the effect
of constraining opposition parties, which already have difficulty finding "cred-
ible" candidates to pitch against the PAP. In the short to medium term, such
a situation will have the effect of reducing the chances of opposition parties at
the ballot box.

20. For more details, see Tan and Lam (1997).

21. Candidates for the presidential election are to be scrutinized by a
government committee. Those who automatically qualify are ex-permanent
secretaries in the civil service, ex-chief executive officers of government statu-
tory boards or of companies with paid-up capital of S$100 million, and ex-
cabinet ministers, although they would have to sever all party affiliations to
contest an election. Although the idea behind having an elected president to
check a profligate government is a laudable one, the criterion of selection for

a candidate is patently undemocratic as it has a built-in bias in favor of PAP leaders and against opposition candidates, no matter how credible.

22. Related to this was Lee's own contention that "what a country needs to develop is discipline more than democracy," cited in Hitchcock (1994, 1).

23. For further elaboration, see Sebastian (1997, 278–298).

24. For an analysis of Singapore's perspectives on Asian values, see Hill and Lian (1995, 193–219) and Emmerson (1995).

25. Michael Fay, an American teenager living in Singapore, was given a three-month jail sentence and six strokes of the cane for vandalism. The sentence was reduced to four strokes upon an appeal for clemency by U.S. President Bill Clinton. The ensuing debate surrounding the case extended to direct criticism of Singapore's political system by human rights groups and newspaper columnists like William Safire and A. M. Rosenthal. The latter was to comment: "The issue is not only vicious flogging, but the other laws of which that is part and symbol: detentions without trial, administrative imprisonment and political, press and academic control, the whole nasty authoritarian collection" (cited in Latif 1996, 325).

26. This point was eloquently made by Wade (1993, 440).

27. This probably explains the Singapore disinclination to provide financial aid and the preference for technical assistance programs as part of its future ODA commitments. Bilahari Kausikan, Singapore's permanent representative to the United Nations, however, stresses vigorously that "Singapore does not hold itself up as a model for anyone. What we have argued consistently is that diversity is an empirical fact—countries have different histories, cultures, values and problems—and thus each nation must find its own best social and political arrangements by means of a pragmatic and continuous process of experimentation. Singapore's approach, in short, is the exact opposite of that implied by the term 'model,' with its universalistic connotations. In our view, there cannot be a 'Singapore model' that is applicable anywhere but in Singapore" (1997, 27–28).

28. See, for example, Zakaria (1994, 113).

29. Quoting an Institute of Policy Studies survey in which 65 percent of interviewees said Singapore was overregulated, a sympathetic Koh stressed that "a balance must be struck between freedom and responsibility, individual liberty and public order, over- and under-regulation" (see "S'poreans Enjoy Benefits" 1991).

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